ADDRESS

OF

R. E. SIR NICHOLAS VAN SLYCK.

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

CALVARY COMMANDERY.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

Calvary Commandery Knights Templar,

No. 13,

PROVIDENCE, R. I.,

MAY 22, A. D. 1885,

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS CHARTER,

BY

R. E. SIR NICHOLAS VAN SLYCK,

PAST GRAND COMMANDER OF MASSACHUSETTS AND RHODE ISLAND,
AND GRAND WARDER OF THE GRAND ENCAMPMENT
OF THE UNITED STATES.

PROVIDENCE: J. A. & R. A. REID, PRINTERS.
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THE origin of Knight Templarism is a subject that has attracted the attention of every Knight of the Order who is at all interested in the history of the institution. To trace its history from the beginning down to our time, has been the delight of Masonic writers, and thus we find that authentic history of the Crusades and the old traditions of Knight Templarism, by reason of the close attention of these writers, the result of which is spread out before us in so many and convenient ways, and withal are so easy of access, and are thus so well known that you may be spared the rehearsal.

The theme, however, is an attractive one, for it brings to our minds the humility, the earnestness, the self-devotion, the spirit of sacrifice, the bravery, the humanity, the love of the Redeemer, the reverence for the Cross as the emblem of His suffering and death, of those nine noble Knights who devoted themselves to alleviating the dangers and distresses to which the pilgrims to the Holy City were exposed, as well as to guard the honor of the saintly virgins and matrons, and to protect the gray hairs of the venerable pilgrim upon these holy journeys. We can but admire their devotion and valor, and easily realize how these popular qualities of the age exercised in so noble a cause, should quickly bring popularity, growth, and success.

How great and powerful became the superstructure founded on so small a beginning. The gallantry that characterized these nine Knights remained the cherished inheritance of their successors, and never be-

came obscured by their arrogance, luxury, wealth and power. The great wealth to which the Order attained became a great temptation to its foes, and was mainly the cause of the persecution of its members, and the downfall of the Order. The grasping and ambitious Clement, and the sordid and brutal Philip — the Pope and the King — coveted that wealth and were jealous of their power, and to obtain the one and to break and destroy the other, by persecution the most brutal to be found recorded in history, they followed the members of the Order until James De Molay, the last Grand Master of the Temple, bore witness to his own grand powers and to the virtue of Templarism by a martyr's death — a death after sufferings the most cruel the skilled ingenuity of his enemies could invent.

Our task to-night refers to a later date in history and to a knighthood when to guard the way to the

Holy City at Jerusalem, to protect the aged, the virgins, the matrons, the pilgrims on their passage thither to offer their devotions at the holy shrine is not required, and such duties do not devolve upon us as Knights Templars. But although we do not now take the vows and gird on our armor for that purpose, yet these vows are not purposeless, our armor not without meaning. The true Knight should dispense justice, reward merit, encourage truth, and diffuse the sublime principles of universal benevolence. The poor, the weary, the hungry, the naked, the wounded, are ever the objects of his care. Unsullied honor, unwearied zeal in a brother's cause, and universal benevolence are the grand characteristics of the Order. These are but obligations that emanate from a higher duty, the duty of the service of Him who died on Calvary, the Redeemer of the world.

When modern Templarism was first introduced upon

this continent, and how and by whom, is a matter involved in great doubt and uncertainty. Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island each claim to be the first wherein it was brought, and its rites practiced. Time will not permit our entry into this field of discussion, nor is it necessary in determining which is the oldest organized body in the United States. It is well determined and undoubtedly true that in the latter part of the last century and early in this century, both lodges and chapters conferred or authorized the conferring of an order of the Red Cross and of the Temple, and, as is claimed, an attempt was made in Pennsylvania to create an organization, and such was made, which thereafter fell to pieces; and, as is claimed by Washington Commandery of Connecticut, that *three* Knights met and opened a body of Templars and conferred the order, but the closing of such session, by a well-known Masonic law, ended

the organization, and naught remained but its "work." It is also unquestionably true that some of the earlier members of Boston Commandery were Templars or had received the order long prior to the organization of the Commandery, in St. Andrew's Chapter, and yet the fact remains that St. John's Commandery is the "oldest Commandery" in the country. As has been well said, "It (St. John's) does not assert that it was the first organization where the orders included in the system of Templary were conferred, nor yet that it was the first association formed by Knights who had taken the orders. It believes itself, however, to be the oldest organization authorized to confer the three orders, viz.: Knights of the Red Cross, Knights Templars, and Knights of Malta (as now), which has had an unbroken, continuous existence from the date of its establishment." It was a component part, and aided in forming the Grand Commandery (then Grand

Encampment) of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and received from that Grand Body the first charter issued by it, and that Grand Commandery so formed was a component part and aided in the formation of the Grand Encampment of the United States of America, and ranks as No. 1 in that grand and magnificent Asylum.

This pioneer, this leader in organized Christian Knighthood, has withstood all assaults of time, and to-day, with an unbroken record of existence, is a proud monument of the enduring character of the institution, not yet weakened, but strengthened by passing time; old only in the period of her existence, but young and vigorous in all that contributes to success and enduring character. God grant that she may ever continue in honest, healthy growth and abiding strength.

From St. John's Commandery sprang Calvary Com-

mandery. All its charter members save one (Sir Knight Edward Hooker, of Washington Commandery, Connecticut), were members of that organization, and its dispensation was granted upon her recommendation. There were those at that time who feared that another Commandery could not be maintained in this city, but it can now be confidently asserted that the existence of this body has tended to the prosperity of Templarism in this part of the jurisdiction, and my belief is that St. John's is what she is to-day, very much the result of the existence of her sister Commandery. Each has been an incentive and aid to the other, inspiring to effort by "that noble contention or rather emulation of who best can work and best agree."

The dispensation for the formation of "Calvary Commandery" is dated November 9, A. D. 1859, and was granted by that high-minded citizen and worthy Templar, whose memory is still cherished by all who

knew him, Winslow Lewis, as Grand Commander, it being the first dispensation issued for the formation of a subordinate Commandery instead of Encampment, or by one as Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. R. E. Grand Commander Lewis held himself bound by the action of the Grand Encampment of the United States upon the subject of nomenclature, and did not wait for any action by the Grand Body of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, before obeying its mandates — "loyal in that as in all things else."

The charter was granted, and dated May 22, A. D. 1860, and our Commandery was constituted January 2, 1861, by M. E. Sir William Field, Grand Master. That eminent Knight did not take the same view of the binding force of the action of the Grand Encampment as did his immediate predecessor, and did not recognize its action upon the subject of nomenclature,

but insisted upon that system that had been in use theretofore in this jurisdiction. Calvary, however, has never recognized any other than that adopted by Grand Commander Lewis, and which is now universally accepted, and her records from the beginning have been the records of a Commandery, and her presiding officer has been known and designated as Commander. She has in this, as in all else, been abreast with the most advanced in every movement tending to benefit and elevate the reputation and high character of the Order, her standard has always been borne by Knights proud of the privilege and ready to protect it from dishonor, and wherever seen has ever given assurance that the grand characteristics of the Order were practiced and cherished by those who marched beneath its folds.

The first time Calvary appeared outside of the state, or in other words, "went away from home," was

October 14, A. D. 1864, and was in the performance of a strictly Masonic duty. An offer had been made by Calvary to the M. W. Grand Master of Masons, of Massachusetts, to do duty as a guard of honor to him during the services of the laying of the corner-stone of the Masonic Temple in Boston, and the same was accepted by Grand Master William Parkman, whereupon M. E. Grand Master of Templars William S. Gardner directed Calvary to report to the Grand Master of Masons in Boston for such duty. We were then but a little over four years from the time of the granting of our dispensation, and were therefore duly proud of the honor of such assignment. Many of us now present know that the duty was performed in a manner highly satisfactory. We became the guests of the Grand Lodge of Masons of Massachusetts at a dinner in Faneuil Hall, and in the evening by special invitation attended a concert in Music Hall, returning home the next morning at one o'clock.

Since this time many and various pilgrimages have been made, both within and without the state. As Calvary had taken part in the services of laying the corner-stone of the Masonic Temple in Boston, so she was present at the dedication of the building there erected to the purposes for which it had been builded. The appearance of the fraternity in Boston, congregated to dedicate a home for Masonry, was worthy of the occasion, and the occasion was made memorable by the presence of the President of the United States.

Woonsocket Commandery (U. D.) by invitation, joined Calvary in Boston and united with her in all the duties of the day. There occurred after the march an inspection and review of the Templars, amounting in number to two thousand Knights, by the Grand Officers. The scene on the Common was one that impressed all who saw it or took part therein. Two thousand Knights, clothed in the rich regalia of

the Order, both black and white, with glittering swords and dancing plumes and the waving folds of gorgeous banners, giving back the rays of the beautiful afternoon sun, surrounded by thousands of delighted spectators, was a scene ever to be remembered and did much to popularize our institution with those who had not taken its vows, and to exalt it with those who had.

These tours of duty have been particularly referred to because they were made in the early days of our existence. Among the other pilgrimages that have been made within and without the state, are pilgrimages to Philadelphia, Newport, Fall River, Lowell, Woonsocket, Worcester, Warren, Baltimore, Westerly, and Chicago. The most notable of these were to Philadelphia and Chicago.

The desirability of and benefits to be derived by an interchange of knightly courtesy and the practice

of hospitality, has never had a better exemplification than such interchange and such practice between Philadelphia Commandery, No. 2, and Calvary. In August, 1878, Philadelphia Commandery, No. 2, honored our city with a three days' visit. How they were received, how cared for, and how entertained, must be left to the Knights of the City of Brotherly Love to relate. It is only for us to remember the pleasure of their presence, the acquaintances made, and the friendships formed. The visit proved but a beginning of an acquaintanceship that has been continued and enlarged by a return visit to the sister city, there to receive a cordiality of welcome and an outpouring of hospitality that evinced their love for the Providence Knights. Mutual love and regard was the ripened fruit of this interchange of visits. The memory of our brother Knights of Philadelphia is continually renewed by the view of that banner, whose

richness in material and beauty of ornamentation are emblematical of the richness of their love for us, and the beauty of the principles we both profess.

I can make but brief mention of the pilgrimage to Chicago to attend upon the triennial session of the Grand Encampment of the United States, in the year 1880. While not forgetting the courtesies and hospitalities of Worcester County and Springfield Commanderies, we cannot pause to remark upon them, but pass directly to the city of the West. There were there assembled the largest body of Templars ever congregated in this country. Calvary took part in the great pageant, and was conspicuous among all those marching Knights. She here did duty as a mounted body, and although not the only mounted Commandery, yet by the completeness of her regalia, and especially the appropriateness of the trappings of her horses, as well as the knightly bearing of her rep-

resentatives, she was especially observed and admired, which was fully attested by the cheers upon cheers that greeted her wherever she appeared. These greetings were given us both as Knights and as representatives of our little state, and filled our hearts with pride. The day of the parade was intensely hot; so hot that many of the Commanderies did not make the whole march, and others lost by the way numbers from their ranks, while Calvary made the whole tour of duty.

All that could be done for our delight was done for us while in that city. It added not a little to our satisfaction that our own Grand Commandery was honored in having one of its Past Grand Commanders elected and installed as Grand Master of Templars of the United States. We returned home without accident, filled with delight at the success of the trip. We had been the recipients of many knightly courtesies and attentions, but the best was yet to come in the warm-

hearted greeting of our Fratres of St. John's. These our Fratres had watched our progress and awaited our return, and when again our feet pressed the soil of home, there they stood greeting us with a grasp of the hand that bespoke the earnestness of their fraternal feeling, and with kindly words that were received in a soil wherein they rested, and from which has grown a goodly part of that fraternity of feeling that characterizes the two bodies. How well we realized the joy of a welcome home, and how sincere was our gratitude.

A curious coincidence is found upon an examination of the records of St. John's and Calvary. It reveals the fact that there are now living of the members of St. John's who were members prior to May 22, A. D. 1860, twenty-three in number. And of the charter members of Calvary, twenty-three are now living.

The first person knighted in this body was that well-

known and highly-honored Mason, James H. Armington, than whom no one has borne himself more to the honor of Knighthood. It is a matter of regret to us all, that his removal from our city has deprived us of the enjoyment as well as the usefulness of his constant presence, but we are assured that his heart is still warm, and that his love for Calvary remains true and vigorous.

Twenty-five years have passed since the granting of our charter. A quarter of a century has gone into the past since the duties demanded by that grant were imposed upon us. How much of history is comprised within that space. If we look outside of our Asylum, we see the waging of the greatest, most costly, and bloodiest war ever known on the Western Continent; great not only in the hosts engaged, the numbers sacrificed, the sufferings endured, but great because of the momentous issue involved. Constitutional liberty,

the life of our Nation, was at stake. The sacrifices we were called upon to make were not made in vain. Our country was preserved, our government is intact and stronger than ever in the affections of a reunited people, and remains a beacon-light to the oppressed of every clime, ever reminding them of their natural rights, beckoning them to an assertion of their rights, and thus to freedom.

In that great contest we as Masons and as Masonic Knights took no part, but our records show that the members of the Fraternity were mindful of their duties as citizens. They in large numbers rallied to the defense of the Nation, and while the flag was in danger, stood beside and beneath it, its shield and its defense.

Peace brought its duties as well as war. Our people were to be reunited in a common love of country. The wounds made by the long and bloody strife were

to be healed. Here was the opportunity for Masonry. Here was its own proper field for work. Well has that work been done. The bonds that bound us together were not loosened, and had not been weakened. When peace permitted Masonic reunions, a renewed intercourse brought together from the different parts of our country, members of the Fraternity, and such reunions and intercourse awakened the old feelings of friendship and brotherly love, softened and obliterated the asperities of the bloody strife, and reunited us as patriotic citizens.

Has this twenty-five years shown that we were created for good? Has our influence been toward the uplifting of humanity? Has it been shown that we deserve continued life? While the order of Knighthood is not a rival of or a substitute for the Christian Church, yet it demands a belief in the cardinal doctrines of that Church. It teaches the existence

of and demands a belief in a Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and inculcates the duty of practicing "those divine teachings and sublime precepts which He has left to guide and direct us in the paths of truth and holiness." It requires something more than to be merely a courteous gentleman,— although every Templar should be that,— to fill all the requirements that are demanded of a perfect Templar. The soul must be lifted up from the grovelings of our lower nature, and made to follow in the steps of Him who was crucified. To live as becomes a Templar, not only benefits him so living, but influences for good the community in which he lives. It therefore follows that, unless by reason of the existence of this Commandery we are better men and more worthy citizens, and the community influenced for good, humanity elevated and benefited, then such ex-

istence has been in vain, and there is no excuse for its continuance. We have not, however, lived in vain. Does any one say that we have not attained to the high standard of duty that has been indicated, but fallen far below it? I answer true, but that no one who has had a continued interest in the Order, who has met with us in our Asylums, witnessed our rites, and taken part in our exercises, but is a better man than he would have been without the influences that have here surrounded him. If he has not been lifted up to the full height demanded by our faith, yet he has been raised above the plane he would otherwise have occupied. Good and evil influence extends in society as the ripples extend upon the water when a stone is dropped into the lake, and thus the influence that any one man has exerted has had a far-reaching power for good or evil. Are we told that bad men are among us? I answer again true, but so are they found

in all societies, that it is only when bad men control the society for evil, that such *society* should be held responsible. During these years there have been created and dubbed many Knights of this valiant and magnanimous order. Some, indeed, have fallen back, been false to their vows, and proved unworthy of the honor conferred, but we rejoice that their numbers are so few, and among the pleasantest thoughts to-night, is the belief that so many have been true and faithful.

The number of charter members was thirty-one, seven have been admitted, and three hundred and eight have been here knighted, making a total of three hundred and forty-six that have been recorded as members upon our roll. Of these there have been admitted, suspended, and died, one hundred and thirteen (of this number thirty-nine have died). The present membership is, therefore, two hundred and thirty-three. Among the fallen we mourn the loss of two Past Commanders.

Thus we are reminded, Sir Knights, that whilst we are permitted to gather here in health and vigor to take account of these past years and to exchange our loving greetings, the Grand Master of the Universe, whose dread summons, we know not when, will call us to the Grand Asylum, has called many of our Fratres to the "land beyond the river." But of all those who have been called away, our hearts turn to-night to our first installed Commander, to him who by his energy, liberality, and magnanimity, protected and guarded us in our early infancy and did so much to assure our manly growth. He was a great-hearted man of unstinted generosity, the helper of the needy and the comforter of the unhappy. Unselfish in his life, faithful in all things, and by his grand virtues and lovable merits, drew to himself all that came to know him. "None knew him but to bless." After all the years that have gone, we have a sad sense of his loss,

and find it hard to bow to the dispensation that sheathed his sword, stilled his great heart, and bore his spirit upward to sing of the triumphs of the Cross. The name of Henry Butler is synonymous to the old members of Calvary, with all that is noble, valiant, and exalted. Our cry is: Hail! brother, and farewell. Our duty is to take up with worthy hands the unperformed work thou wast not permitted to do.

The Scandinavian God Odin, or Woden, is represented as having two black Ravens, Hugin and Munin, one resting upon either shoulder, and Northern mythology informs us that every day they fly over the whole world and upon their return report to him all they have seen and heard. That upon knowledge thus obtained Odin was enabled to govern from full knowledge. So, too, should we have our Messenger Ravens, diligently seeking for us knowledge from over the whole world, so that we can govern ourselves wisely,

and guide our beloved Calvary to a still higher rank for all those qualities which beautify and adorn the perfect Templar.

These Ravens are sometimes called "Memory" and "Reflection," and were said to be continually whispering in his ears. So, as we are gathered here to-night, does the Raven Memory whisper in our ears of the past, telling us of the joys which have come to us from sweet converse and delightful companionship in our many pilgrimages, and gatherings in our Asylums; but intermingled with these joys comes also the story of our short-comings, our sorrows, our griefs over the fallen ones, those who have gone before at the call of the Grand Master. Let us heed also the voice of the Raven Reflection, as she points out the lessons to be derived from that past, as she tells us that it is not all of life to live, or all of death to die; and as she tells us of the Redeemer and the glorious Resurrection and the life beyond—

"To the past go more dead faces
Every year,
As the loved leave vacant places
Every year.
Everywhere their sad eyes meet us,
In the evening dusk they greet us,
And to come to them entreat us,
Every year.

You are growing old, they tell us,
Every year,
You are more alone they tell us,
Every year.
You can win no new affection,
You have only recollection,
Deeper sorrow and dejection,
Every year.

But the truer life draws nigher
Every year,
And its morning star climbs higher
Every year.
Earth's hold on us grows slighter,
And the heavy burdens lighter,
And the dawn immortal brighter,
Every year."

IN VIA CRUCIS VITA